



View from the Blackdown Hills

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Issue 73 November 2010

Regional win for landscape team

THE team behind the Neroche Scheme is celebrating after winning the south west regional heat of the UK Landscape Award.

The award was created by the European Landscape Convention to recognise efforts to enhance great landscapes across the country.

A range of landscapes were eligible to enter including coastal, agricultural or industrial. They could be newly designed landscapes or improved natural ones.

The Neroche Scheme is a Landscape Partnership Scheme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It covers 35 square miles of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and has delivered a range of projects aimed at investing in the heritage of the area, making the landscape more accessible and improving people's ability to sustain the qualities of the landscape.

The Scheme is led by the Forestry Commission with the close involvement of a local community Stakeholders Group, and brought together a partnership of 17 other local authorities and organisations.

The Neroche Local Stakeholder Group put the Neroche Scheme forward for the award to seek recognition for its work across a wide range of activity.

This has included the creation of a popular Herepath Trail for walkers and horse riders, development of innovative Digital Trail Guides, provision of services for schools and family audiences through Forest Schools and family bushcraft, a popular field archaeology project, and a massive programme of wildlife habitat restoration.

Dr Rosemary Viant from the Local Stakeholders Group wrote the submission and says: "I feel the Neroche Scheme has had a very positive impact on the area.

"It has been a privilege to be part of such a worthwhile project, and I am proud to be associated with it.

The Neroche project has strong community involvement and has brought so much to the area including habitat restoration, trails, community archaeology, forest schools and arts based interpretation.

"I am delighted that it won the regional heats of this award and that it is being recognised as a great landscape venture."

Gavin Saunders, who manages the Neroche Scheme for the Forestry Commission, said: "This award recognises years of work in the Neroche area by a wide range of people, both professionals



◆ NEROCHE team recognised for efforts to enhance great landscapes

and volunteers. We set out to celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the northern Blackdown Hills, and to release its true potential for wildlife and people. Thanks to the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and our other local funders, the community of the Blackdown Hills and its neighbouring towns can now continue to benefit for years to come from this wonderful landscape."

The Neroche Scheme was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Nerys Watts, head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West said: "This award is richly deserved by the Neroche Scheme. Our landscapes are as much under threat as other parts of our heritage, and yet we often take them for granted.

"Through this project, people from across the community have been able to work together to preserve, celebrate and enjoy the rich combination of man-made and natural heritage of the Blackdown Hills."

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WORKING OUR WOODLANDS

Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association with John Greenshields

THERE is a visit to Perrie Hale Nurseries being organised by the B&EDWA hosted by Oliver Davey. He will guide us around the large supply of trees and shrubs and give advice on planting and guards plus answer to all your questions.

The visit will take place on Saturday, November 13th. Visit www.woodbiz.co.uk for details.

By the time this is in print the leaves will be starting to turn and drop from most of the trees, oak is usually the last to give in to winter.

Working our Woodlands has been going for a year now and it has 50 or so woods in the scheme and around 300 hectares, most of which probably would not be in management if not for WoW.

The B&EDWA membership also has been boosted and the new contractors directory out soon.

Several months ago I asked readers to let me know if they had seen and old elms not effected, I have since visited 12 sites and recorded the trees and taken photos and samples of leaves to send to the lab in York, there they are looking into whether these trees have survived because they have become immune or were just lucky.

Thank you for all you sightings and I will reply to you all with the findings of the lab, and as each one was marked I can tell were each specimen came from.

I have been involved recently with some sycamore over-hanging a churchyard, this, in its self, is no problem but the opposite side of the trees have been severely cut back by developers.

This has made the trees lop sided and waited heavily on one side, it is very important to keep limbs — or at least weight — equal all round the tree when doing any work. My usual contacts are 01823660764 or parkfarm@tinyonline.co.uk.

Elected mayor for the region could be found

By ANDERS LARSSON

anders@tindlenews.co.uk

AN elected mayor could be installed for south Somerset after local elections next year.

South Somerset District Council (SSDC) is against the idea but has to consider and consult on it as part of new legislation.

New legislation requires the council to change its current executive decision-making process to one of two options — a strong leader or elected mayor.

Ian Clarke, SSDC assistant director for legal and corporate services and monitoring officer, doesn't expect a huge deal of public interest in the matter.

He said: "Whilst this is a matter that is unlikely to generate much excitement amongst the public, we would like to hear their views."

"The council has initially considered both options and feels that moving to the elected mayor model is not appropriate in terms of either the

increased costs involved in the elections or because of the fact that it removes the ability for a simple majority of members to not approve any proposals from the executive in terms of the budget or strategic policies.

"However, before it makes a final decision the council wants to know the views of its residents."

"We need to adopt new arrangements for the governance of our executive body by the end of December which would be introduced following the district (and parish) elections in May 2011."

The strong leader option is described as similar to the current system at SSDC, with a leader elected by the councillors every four years.

The leader would be able to appoint and dismiss executive members, with the elected councillors being able to remove the leader during their term of office if they see fit.

The mayoral option would see someone directly elected for a term of four years.

The elected mayor would then

choose their executive, but there is no provision to allow for the removal of the mayor during their term of office.

Under the mayor model, his or her executive committee submits the budget and strategic policies to the council, which can only amend or overturn them by a two-thirds majority.

Under either option there would be no changes to how the remaining SSDC area and other committees operate or their terms of reference.

Following the consultation, the council will make the decision on which of the two options to adopt at its meeting in December 2010.

The consultation runs until Friday, November 19th 2010. Comments should be made to the Monitoring Officer at democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk or in writing to South Somerset District Council, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2HT.

For more information on the options please visit the special link on the homepage at <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk>.

EDITOR'S NOTE

AS a newspaper editor it is always a good sign when a company takes on a new addition to its titles, so it is with great pleasure that I take the reins of View from the Blackdown Hills.

It is also exciting to have a new project to work on and this is the first monthly title to add to our nine weekly papers covering east Devon, south Somerset and west Dorset.

Living nearby to the Blackdowns myself, I have a love for the area and the countryside and feel lucky to be near to and able to work in such a beautiful part on the world.

Being an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Blackdowns is an extremely interesting and vast area to cover but our editorial and sales teams, based in Axminster, are thriving on the new challenge and hope to provide an informative community newspaper.

We have news from all over the hills in this issue and welcome, as with all our titles, input from the readers as, after all, it is your newspaper.

Please contact us with your Blackdown Hills news, stories and events and we will endeavour to cover the best of the news each month, providing our readers with a comprehensive round-up of information from the areas that matter to them. You can email the news team at blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk.

This month we have an extensive equestrian sporting report of an event held by Blackdown Hills Riding Club plus news from across the area.

We are also featuring a photo every month — A View from the Blackdowns — so if any of you budding photographers have a shot of the lovely countryside, do send it in.

Kate Williams
Editor

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Two bat surveys to take place to identify bats' best locations

TWO bat surveys are to go ahead in the Blackdown Hills.

The surveys are to take place after Wellington-based Somerset Wildlife Trust, along with Devon Wildlife Trust, were granted funding from the Blackdown Hills AONB.

Liz Biron, survey manager for Somerset Environmental Records Centre, who is leading the project for Somerset Wildlife Trust, said: "The Blackdown Hills are a very

special place for bats. This project will allow us to map the area in detail for the first time so we can identify where and how bats use the landscape so these areas can be restored and protected."

"Bats require extensive, varied territories and thrive in areas rich in insects and beetles. While it is known that the habitats found in the Blackdowns is favourable to bats, there is a lack of data about current numbers, species and locations."

"Bat numbers in the UK have plummeted in recent times as a result of pesticide use, habitat loss, and the destruction of roosts and hibernation sites."

"We will be working with local volunteers to carry out a 'Big Bat Survey' next September and taking scout groups on guided night time walks so they can learn more about the valuable wildlife that relies on the habitat within these beautiful hills."

Contact the news team at blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

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Green shop adds solar roof panels

A COMMUNITY shop has continued its environmentally-friendly approach by installing solar panels on its roof.

Dalwood Community Shop went plastic bag-free in June 2008 and has now gone a step further by installing electricity-saving solar panels.

The shop is run entirely by volunteers and has been described as "a triumph of community spirit and enterprise".

A planning application to install the solar panels was heard in February this year, and the panels were installed in early October.

The aims of the project was

described as follows in a report written for the planning hearing: "The community shop association, which is an entirely voluntary association is seeking to fit the solar panels to the building to reduce their electricity bill by half, and diminish their footprint on the environment by reducing their emissions by up to one tonne."

"The association would also like to use the panels as a permanent example of a community renewable energy project."

Kathy Lang, the chair of the shop committee, explained grants totalling just over £10,000 made the project possible.

She echoed the report by saying: "Hopefully we will

reduce bills by half at least."

One of the grants came from a scheme called Making it Local, which is a five-year £2.4 million scheme covering the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), East Devon AONB and surrounding areas.

Applications can be made by various sorts of business and organisations, including private businesses, farms (for non-farming activities), sole traders, social enterprises, parish and town councils, voluntary groups, local community groups and charities.

More information about the application process is available online at www.makingitlocal.org.



PHOTOS BY COLIN BOWERMAN



◆ KATHY Laing and Shelagh Beak are pictured, right, in front of the display, holding a print-out of the information that will be on display. Above, the solar panel array on the rear roof of the Dalwood shop

Cuts reaction: disappointing but expected

SOUTH Somerset District Council (SSDC) has called the Government's spending review disappointing but as expected.

Conservative Chancellor George Osborne recently announced the Government's spending cuts to help the UK out of its deficit. SSDC said that it is committed to retaining frontline services which the public have said they value, wherever possible and that it had been expecting cuts and has therefore been planning ahead.

SSDC has taken a prudent approach to setting its Medium Term Financial Plan, and has already factored in an assumed 30% cut to its budget over the next four years.

The 28.4 per cent cut to local government funding announced as part of today's Government Spending Review has been described as 'disappointing but not different to what has already been worked into its finance plans', by South Somerset District Council.

"South Somerset has always taken a prudent approach to financial planning

and so we had already factored in an assumed 30 per cent cut to our budget over the next four years, said leader, Councillor Tim Carroll.

"In effect, our predictions have been very close to the announced financial reductions and today's announcements have not come as a total and unexpected shock.

"However it is true to say that there will be impacts that we will all feel. South Somerset is firmly committed to retaining frontline services wherever possible and this significant and ongoing reduction in funding will have real and indisputable effects on the extent of our services.

"In short, we have worked this level of cuts into our forward plan but it will be a case of looking very carefully each year for the next four years at where we can find these levels of savings.

"The devil will obviously be in the detail and we will now need to spend several days analysing how today's announcements will affect our budget and our services.

"These savings should primarily come

from efficiencies and partnership working such as our work with East Devon District Council.

"South Somerset already has an enviable record in achieving efficiencies and has achieved £3.7m in savings since early 2008 by embracing smarter procurement, business process re-engineering, better use of its assets and entering partnerships for waste collection and audit.

"We already have ongoing dialogue with the unions over future staffing and expenditure.

"The most important thing is that we do all we can to retain services that the public have told us they value, wherever we can.

Donna Parham, the district council's Section 151 Officer and Assistant Director for Financial and Corporate Services explained, "It will take time to fully analyse the impact of the changes announced today, and there may be further considerations when the Government announce how much specific Government grant we will receive in November or December."

Pub's selection for guide

THE Merry Harriers at Clayhidon has been selected as The Good Pub Guide 2011 Devon Dining Pub of the Year.

This award is chosen by customers for customers and places The Merry Harriers in the Top 50 Dining Pubs in the UK.

Peter Gatling, who runs the pub with partner Angela, said: "We are overwhelmed and delighted by this accolade and would like to thank all of our staff, suppliers, customers and supporters.

The pair has owned The Merry Harriers since June 2005.

The pub dates from 1492 and sits at 800 feet on top of The Blackdown Hills. It straddles the Devon and Somerset border with a Devon postal address but a Somerset location. The Merry Harriers is one of the few remaining freehold freehouses in The Blackdown Hills.

"Above all what makes a good pub is its atmosphere", says editor Fiona Stapley. "You should be able to feel at home there, and feel not just that you're glad you've come but that they're glad you've come. A good landlord or landlady makes a huge difference here — they can make or break a pub."

"The current economic downturn has stimulated pub chefs to inject a strong dose of common sense into their menus.

"We have been struck this year by the way that even the most ambitious dining pubs have been serving good food that's less fanciful without being any less delicious.

"So there are more old favourites around these days, but supercharged by top-quality ingredients and a chef's personal ingenuity. Good old ham, eggs and chips becomes home-reared rare-breed gammon with free range eggs from their own hens, and triple-cooked chips.

"All sorts of interesting sausages are teamed with unusual mash, perhaps gravy made with caramelised red onions and beer or red wine.

"Those triple-cooked chips turn up again with beer- or tempura-battered fresh haddock with home-made tartare sauce, as boosters behind the regained popularity of fish and chips in pubs."



◆ MERRY Harriers at Clayhidon



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New cycling route launch for the hills

CYCLING fans are getting a new dedicated route to enjoy.

The route, which takes riders through the Blackdown Hills from Wellington, through Buckland Woods and Hemyock and back, was launched recently with a special ceremony.

Wellington Mayor and Mayoress, Andrew and Jackie Govier, as well as deputy mayor Vivienne Stock-Williams, joined vintage bicycle enthusiasts Taunton Tweeds to christen the new route, the first in a new series, resplendent in period cycling gear.

They rode part of the new route, devised by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team.

The whole series can be downloaded from the AONB website at www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Ro utes.

Day change for toddlers

MEMBURY Toddler Group is now running sessions on a Monday afternoon from 2pm until 3.30pm in Membury Village Hall.

The sessions, which are run throughout term time, are free and children can come and play with toys, puzzles and colouring while parents and carers can enjoy a cup of coffee.

On November 22nd the group will be painting plates supplied by Honiton pottery — there will be a cost for this activity.

On December 15th there will be a Christmas party for the children.

Anyone who would like more information should ring Lynette on 07590 453347.

Choir gets a new trainer

BUDDING singers across the Blackdown Hills are getting the chance to sing songs from around the world as part of the Blackdown Community Choir.

The unaccompanied choir, which has been running for eight years, has recently been taken over by Caroline Rigby.

She said: "There are no auditions, and no need to read music. Everything is taught by ear so no experience is needed."

For more information email l.c.rigby@btinternet.com.

Duck event raises £320

A DUCK race organised by the parents', teachers' and friends' association (PTFA) of Dalwood Primary School raised £320 for school funds.

The annual event was staged at the end of September and a PTFA spokesperson said: "Thanks to everyone for coming along and supporting this community event."

Help sought for butterflies

ENTHUSIASTIC volunteers are being sought to monitor the butterflies in different locations throughout the Neroche area of the Blackdown Hills.

No prior knowledge is required. Ring 01823 680846 for more information.



Kids get a taste of Victorian life

VICTORIAN life was experienced by the children and staff of Dalwood Primary School during a trip to Morwellham Quay in Tavistock on Friday, October 1st.

Morwellham Quay's motto is "keeping the past alive for everyone to enjoy" and it features a restored 19th century village, docks and quays with a restored ship, a copper mine, a Victorian farm and a nature reserve.

The Dalwood children have studied Victorian Britain and how children lived during that time.

A school spokesperson said: "Morwellham's Past Lives day gave the children the chance to enact the daily lives of Victorian children."

"Activities included the assayer's home and laboratory, which looked at the work of the assayer and life in a middle class household - including the lives of domestic servants."

The children experienced a very traditional school teacher in the village school, and the Dalwood youngsters also got a taste of child labour through the recreation of rock breaking and sorting in the mine.



◆ PUPILS from Dalwood Primary School learn all about the Victorian lifestyle at Morwellham Quay

AONB team helps protect galaxy view

NEW guidance has been published to help local people reduce light pollution and protect their view of the galaxy.

The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team has produced a series of information sheets which are now available to download.

This work carries on from the International Year of Astronomy in 2009, which was marked by stargazing events across the Blackdown Hills.

In May of this year, the Daily Telegraph named the Blackdown Hills as one of the UK's top locations for night sky watching. However, even here the darkness

is at risk as an ever-increasing level of artificial light encroaches from villages, roads and neighbouring towns.

The AONB team is keen to involve people living both within the AONB and in the towns and villages nearby in making sure that night time illumination is kept to a minimum.

Katherine Morgan, the AONB's information officer, said: "We are very fortunate in the Blackdown Hills to have the glorious view of the stars and planets that we do — it's something that just 10 per cent of the British population can see these days."

"These new information sheets give local people practical steps to make sure their own homes or

premises aren't leaking light and detracting from the natural night sky."

To download the light pollution guidance, go to the 'looking after' pages of the Blackdown Hills AONB's website at www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk.

Astronomy events in the area continue during the autumn and winter with a stargazing evening in Hemyock on February 26th.

This event will include the chance to experience the South West's largest mobile planetarium, as well as a guided tour of the night sky with telescopes.

For more information see the events diary on the AONB's website or call 01823 680681.

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A View from the Blackdowns



◆ DAWN at Dumpdon, near Honiton, taken by Harriet Pottinger

Groups urged to apply for Euro funding share

BUSINESSES and community groups in the Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and surrounding areas are being urged to apply for a share of a £2.4million European funding pot.

The funding programme, known as Making it Local, has now allocated nearly half its funding to 32 projects but there is still plenty more funding available

Projects which focus on small business creation and growth, strengthening local communities, or connecting people and the landscape could be eligible for grants worth between £1,000 and £10,000.

A spokesman said: "Making it Local offers a lifeline to local people with great

ideas who need more resources.

"When the original bid was made to the EU, the two AONB's were keen to include funding to help people develop good applications. "Making it Local is a great way to inject some much needed investment into private and social enterprise in rural areas. To be successful, your idea will need to show how it will benefit the local economy, be environmentally sustainable and that there is sufficient demand for it locally.

"We can give advice to projects on how to demonstrate this and whether the fund will be suitable for them."

Ring 01823 680626 or visit www.makingitlocal.org for details.

School dinners for life serves up over 60 roasts

NO less than 66 roast beef dinners were served up at St Andrew's Primary School in Chardstock on Wednesday, September 29th.

The occasion was a Food for Life Partnership Roast Dinner Day, which saw parents and members of the local community join pupils for an organic and locally-sourced roast dinner.

The event celebrated work at the school to improve dinners as well as its overall food culture.

Schools throughout England were invited to take part in the Food for Life Partnership Roast Dinner Day.

The partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture.

www.viewfromtheblackdownhills.co.uk

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◆ OLIVIA Benger, 17, of Dalwood, rides Killarney in their winning joint-showjumping and cross-country round at the Blackdown Hills Riding Club open Express Eventing, above. Inset, the pair during the dressage phase



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEFINITIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

Benger sisters in ribbons at express event

By KATE WILLIAMS

kate@findlenews.co.uk

TWO Blackdown Hills sisters left a recent equestrian competition in the ribbons after two days competing at Bicton Arena.

Olivia and Sophie Benger, of Dalwood, both took part in the Express Eventing competition and dressage event held at the arena on Saturday and Sunday, October 18th and 19th.

The double event was organised by Blackdown Hills Riding Club but open to any rider and involved an express eventing competition which is a relatively new, shortened version of a one-day-event, to encourage beginners to the sport, as well as the dressage on the Sunday.

The eventing was scored on style and not speed so the cross-country and showjumping phase was not timed.

Olivia, 17, won class 5 on Killarney with an excellent dressage mark of 71 per cent and a total score of 339.

Sophie, 14, came third in class 4 on McCoy with a dressage mark of 66 per cent and a total score of 321.

Both girls won places in class 2 of

the dressage, Prelim 12, with Sophie beating her older sister by taking second place over Olivia's 6th. Sophie scored 66 per cent against Olivia's respectable 57.6 per cent mark.

Two Lamberts Castle Riding Club members also did well at the express eventing.

Kate Williams came away with top spot in class 1 on Mazelands Ladybird with a dressage mark of 69 per cent and a total score of 278.

Rebecca Holmes was second in class 6 on Reggie Del Boy with a dressage mark of 66 per cent and a total score of 329.

Event organiser Claire Dean said: "The whole weekend was a huge success, the feedback we got from riders was excellent and it seems that everyone really enjoyed it."

"We held this express eventing competition last year at Bicton over one day and riders asked us if we could do it over two days and incorporate more classes."

"Entries were down on what we expected unfortunately, but it was still well attended and I think everyone that came loved the event."

"The weather was excellent and there were no incidents which is

always nice.

"This type of competition really opens it up for younger riders and novices to the sport and the horses love it because it is something different."

"I think it will become more and more popular and, of course, it's a great opportunity for more novice riders to compete in the Bicton Arena - it's a dream come true for most riders!"

Riding club chairman Vicky Goody said: "The feedback from competitors was excellent but we are struggling for club members at the moment so it is difficult finding enough help to run this type of competition."

"If all the competitors who enjoyed the event joined our club, that would be brilliant!"

Blackdown Hills Riding Club was founded approximately 40 years ago by a small group of people wanting to create a friendly, happy club for families. This ethos has remained and the club, now run by a motivated and friendly committee, endeavors to put on a variety of events for its members' needs.

Blackdown Hills Riding Club is affiliated to the British Horse Society and is one of the riding clubs within



Generate energy and income with Feed-In Tariffs

Richard Morgan, of Hemyock-based Intelligent Energy South West, explains how new rules have turned renewable energy into a serious investment.

Many people I meet have heard about new rules on 'green electricity', but many don't know what it all means for them.

The Feed-In Tariff (FiT) scheme, which was introduced by the government earlier this year, pays householders and others for producing renewable energy. Legislation obliges energy companies to buy green electricity exported to the grid.

The Tariffs give three financial benefits. There is a payment for all the electricity you produce, even if you use it yourself. Then there are additional payments for electricity you export into the grid. Finally, there is the reduction on your standard electricity bill, from using energy you produce yourself.

The FiTs are calculated to give a return on your investment of around 8%. With interest rates currently at rock bottom, that far outperforms most savings and investments on offer from the banks.

The scheme is guaranteed for 25 years. The payback time on your original outlay will be around 10 years, during which you benefit from free electricity. After this, you will have 15 years of assured tax-free income.

There are various types of installation which you can use to produce electricity, including solar panels, solar roof tiles, micro-hydro generators (which work in flowing water), and wind turbines.

Whatever type you choose, your system needs to be installed by a Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accredited contractor in order to claim the FiT payments. My own area of expertise is solar generation, but there are companies in the Blackdown Hills offering all the other technologies too. I certainly believe that local contractors offer the most personal, high quality service.

Some people who live in the Blackdown Hills tell me they worry that they will face restrictions on renewable energy installations because their property is within the protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In fact, the AONB Partnership is keen to encourage green energy production on a domestic scale.

So green electricity generation can be sympathetic to the landscape, it helps the global effort to slow climate change, and these days it makes money too.

For more information, call Richard at Intelligent Energy South West on

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◆ SOPHIE Benger clears an upright in the combined showjumping and cross-country phase on McCoy

British Riding Clubs Area 12. The Club covers a large area geographically, including Taunton, villages in the Blackdown Hills — down to Exeter and as far over as Minehead.

For more information about Blackdown Hills Riding Club and its events or to become a member, visit www.blackdownhillsridingclub.com.

Express Eventing results: Class 1 - Prelim 7: 1st Kate Williams - Mazelands Ladybird; 2nd Emilia Wharton - Folly; 3rd Carron Saunders - Belle; 4th Nicola Morrison - Showtime Sam; 5th Lucy Thompson - Samira XIII.

Class 2 - Prelim 12: 1st Emily Rix - Thistledown Seashell; 2nd Abigail Jarvis - Charlie; 3rd Suzy Stoneman - Foot to the Flora; 4th Natalie Santon - Redigan; 5th Chloe Sutcliffe - Polly; 6th Rhiannon Tewson - Minty.

Class 3 - BE91: 1st Rosa Sell - Gracie; 2nd Jack Gayne - Jazzie Jazz; 3rd Annie Mingo - Billabong; 4th Hannah Mann - Henry; 5th Flora Fraser - Cally; 6th Lauren Picknett - Benson.

Class 4 - BE91: 1st Lauren Picknett - Minty; 2nd Pheobe Van Sommeren - Jemma; 3rd Sophie Benger - McCoy; 4th Chloe Price - Baileys Cream; 5th Cheryl Beer - A Dazzling Turn; 6th

Ella Matravers - Blazing Run.

Class 5 - BE101: 1st Olivia Benger - Killarney; 2nd Cheryl Beer - Madam Butterfly; 3rd Lucy Lee - Lady Griz; 4th Ella Matravers - Rufus Stone; 5th Katherine Balfour - Defining Trends; 6th Jess Tansley - Foxdon Half Pint.

Class 6 - Nov 111: 1st Lucy Loughton - Jumbolena; 2nd Rebecca Holmes - Reggie Del Boy; 3rd Philippa Balfour - Tiger Lily; 4th Emma-Jane Auger - Liberty Fayre; 5th Cameron Beer - Centyfield Czaia; 6th Lucinder Hawkins-Adams - Cortez.

Dressage results: Class 1 - Prelim 1: 1st Daniel Ravanscroft - Annie; 2nd

Nicola Gostling - Ten Tors.

Class 2 - Prelim 12: 1st Abigail Jarvis - Abancio; 2nd Sophie Benger - McCoy; 3rd Nicola Norman - Nystant's Ace; 4th Abigail Jarvis - U'ranos; 5th Chloe Campbell - Winston; 6th Olivia Benger - Killarney.

Class 3 - Novice 28: 1st Chloe Campbell - Winston; 2nd Nicola Norman - Nystant's Ace; 3rd Christine Morey.

Class 4 - Novice 27: 1st Abigail Jarvis - U'ranos; 2nd Abigail Jarvis - Abancio; 3rd Nicola Norman - Nystant's Ace; 4th Claire Ford - DJ's Addition.

Globetrotters pay Shakespeare visit

A HIGHLY refreshing concert in Culmstock recently brought Shakespeare to the Blackdowns, together with contemporary music by Antony Holborne, writes Geoffrey Bass.

Players from the The Milton Consort from the Globe Theatre, London presented a convincing blend of speech and music from the year 1599, accompanied by an amazing variety of Tudor instruments.

The versatility of the three members of the band was such that we heard more than 30 different sounds from pipes, drums, viols, lutes, and bagpipes.

The principal feature of the concert, however, was the truly individual performance of a beautifully crafted set of Shakespeare's Sonnets, spoken by Globe Theatre actor Peter Hamilton Dyer.

Some people in the audience who knew these works well came away

with a new understanding of the carefully selected poems.

For those of us in the majority who heard them live for the first time discovered their astonishing intensity, meaning and poetry.

The clarity and fluency of his delivery, as well as his physical likeness, had us believing that we actually had Shakespeare himself in the room.

The Milton Consort received an enthusiastic acclamation after their final musical flourish. The band was led by Keith McGowan, together with Patxi del Amo and Armeir Hauksen.

Earlier in the day the group had visited two local secondary schools to demonstrate and study Tudor music and dance. It is rumoured that the group will return in 2011 with a programme of Playford's 1653 Dancing Master. Watch out for the date in Blackdowns Early Music Project calendar.

Neroche trail guides go digital for country lovers

DIGITAL Trail Guides (DTG) are now available from the Neroche Office in Hemyock.

A DTG is a handheld touch-screen computer that acts as a personal audio-visual guide to the Staple Fitzpaine Herepath Trail.

You can explore the landscape surrounding the trail in a new way by listening to audio stories and watching animations about the history of the area. There are also images to help identify trees, plants and

animals, and GPS technology to track your location along the trail.

There are 10 special GPS hotspots positioned along the trail — as you walk into each of these special areas a digital animation and audio story will automatically play on the handset.

The handsets are free to hire but a credit or debit card number and photo-ID will be required as a security deposit. Call the Neroche office in Hemyock on 01823 680846 for more information.

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countrysceneextra

Written by countryside
correspondent
TONY JACKSON



Rare bird visits for only its 39th time

A SURVEY has just been released which discloses that whilst the great majority of divers care about marine wildlife during their underwater explorations, there is still need to raise awareness about the laws dealing with the collecting of shellfish and a new Divers Shellfish Code has been published, urging divers to act responsibly by limiting catches to what they can eat and to observe the law.

People diving at Kimmeridge Bay in the Purbeck Marine Wildlife Reserve took part in the survey between May and September and while some 78 per cent of those questioned expressed concern that divers should not take excessive amounts of shellfish, nearly half were not aware of the laws against taking breeding animals or selling their catch.

I encountered this problem at first-hand when, a few months ago, I spent several hours at sea, from Lulworth Bay, with a professional

fully licensed scallop fisherman and diver. He told me that whilst he had to invest in a boat, diving equipment and pay a substantial fee to operate, amateur divers were scooping up scallops and any other edible crustaceans, and in many cases selling them. Not only was this illegal, but they were also ignoring safety regulations.

He had to phone in to the coastguard at regular intervals to establish his position, and provide full diving details in case of an accident.

In addition, all scallops brought up have to be graded for size and those too small returned to the sea, a conservation measure which is largely ignored by amateur divers. Legal minimum sizes for lobsters, crabs, scallops and spider crabs have now been published for the benefit of amateurs.

Julie Hatcher, Marine Awareness Officer at Dorset Wildlife Trust, says that the survey shows that most divers are concerned about the marine environment and support our call for a responsible attitude to

diving and shellfish collecting. Well, yes, that may be so, but I suspect that there is still an irresponsible minority who allow greed to overcome responsibility. According to the survey the fish favoured by divers are cuttlefish, lobster, crab, ray, shark and conger eels. Curiously, no mention of scallops.

■ A few weeks ago my wife and I drove down to Chideock and then took the long winding lane that leads down to Seatown and The Anchor Inn. Poised above the shingle beach and with glorious views of the swelling grassy cliffs and placid sea, the Inn was crowded with late holiday-makers enjoying the warm sun and the excellent hospitality and fare provided.

After a splendid lunch of mussels and sea-food we walked over to the beach to watch a small knot of miniature helicopter fliers send their craft whizzing and whirling above the waves. Suddenly, a sickle-winged bird sped across the scene, heading for a grey cliff face. The immature peregrine, for such it was, darted out of sight and, I dare say,

the hedge and field birds relaxed again.

■ I have just been reminded by Patricia Farrell, via Kimmo Evans of the east Devon AONB Partnership, that every year around about now, mining bees — *Colletes hederæ* — visit the cliffs at Beer to lay their eggs in the soft chalk.

The bees arrive in large numbers to excavate holes and then, having deposited their eggs, disperse only to return in the spring to feed the newly hatched larvae with pollen. These bees are very docile and can be seen on the cliff next to the Fine Foundation Centre.

■ I am always puzzled by the sudden emergence in the autumn of field mushrooms, appearing in patches where they have seldom before been seen. One such is in a stretch of grass in the field beside the house, and where mushrooms have never before been seen.

This year I have picked several breakfasts of these delicious fungi, making sure to collect them in the early morning before anyone else snaffles them, as a public footpath



◆ A PHOTOGRAPH of the young osprey at the Axe estuary taken by Sue Smith

runs through the field. Where do the spores come from? Are they perhaps carried by birds or wind-blown? It is a puzzle.

■ Balloons are, it would seem, a menace to wild life. That is the conclusion of the Dorset Wildlife Trust who, following a clean-up of litter in Worbarrow Bay, discovered a high proportion of discarded balloons which, though they may appear harmless, can be fatal to wildlife such as turtles which mistake them for jellyfish.

In fact, marine litter, including a vast amount of plastic, is turning the world's seas into deadly junkyards. Some 188kg of rubbish was picked from the beach by 70 volunteers.

Amongst the junk collected were fish hooks, spent shotgun cartridges,

a fridge door and, inevitably, vast quantities of plastic.

Plastic bags are an absolute menace and the sooner they are completely eliminated by supermarkets and other stores the better

■ On the bird front an extreme rarity, a solitary Sandpiper, was seen on Black Hole Marsh behind Seatown. This is only the 39th record of this American wader and the first for Devon and, not surprisingly, attracted scores of twitchers.

The young osprey, which stayed so long on the Axe estuary, has now departed, but observers were thrilled to see how, over a few days, its fishing technique swiftly improved and it was soon catching large mullet.

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Help keep our night skies special

New guidance has been published to help people reduce light pollution and protect our view of the galaxy.

The AONB team has produced a series of information sheets which are now available to download.

In May of this year, the Daily Telegraph named the Blackdown Hills as one of the UK's top locations for night sky watching. However, even here the darkness is at risk as an ever increasing level of artificial light encroaches from villages, roads and neighbouring towns.

The AONB team is keen to involve local people in making sure that night time

illumination is kept to a minimum.

Katherine Morgan, the AONB's information officer said:

"We are very fortunate in the Blackdown Hills to have a glorious view of the stars and planets - it's something that just 10% of the British population can see these days. These new information sheets give local people practical steps to make sure their own homes or premises aren't leaking light and detracting from the natural night sky".

To download the light pollution guidance, go to the 'looking after' pages of the Blackdown Hills AONB's website.



◆ Night sky over the Wellington Monument

Neroche scheme regional winner of UK Landscape Award

The team behind the Neroche scheme are celebrating after winning the South West regional heat of the UK Landscape Award.

The award was created by the European Landscape Convention to recognise efforts to enhance great landscapes across the country. The Neroche Local Stakeholder Group put the Neroche scheme forward for the award to seek recognition

for its work across a wide range of activities, including the creation of the Herepath trail, development of the digital trail guides, forest schools and family bushcraft work, field archaeology and wildlife habitat restoration.

Dr Rosemary Viant from the Local Stakeholders Group wrote the submission and says:

"I feel the Neroche scheme

has had a very positive impact on the area. It has been a privilege to be part of such a worthwhile project, and I am proud to be associated with it. The Neroche Project has strong community involvement and I am delighted that it won recognition as a great landscape venture."

Nerys Watts, head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West says:

"This award is richly deserved by the Neroche Scheme. Our landscapes are as much under threat as other parts of our heritage, and yet we often take them for granted. Through this project, people from across the community have been able to work together to preserve, celebrate and enjoy the rich combination of man-made and natural heritage of the Blackdown Hills."

Mushrooms and more - November events

Winter is magical in the countryside, and November is a great month to wrap up warm and join us for a host of walks, courses and activities.

| Date | Location | Event |
|---------|---------------------|---|
| 03 Nov | Castle Neroche | Walk along a section of the Neroche Trail |
| 04 Nov | Neroche Parish Hall | Neroche forest grazing project – evening update |
| 06 - 07 | Stockland Corrymoor | Farm open weekend |
| 10 Nov | tbc | Practical volunteering day |
| 13 Nov | Bishopswood | Mushroom foray |
| 13 Nov | Yarcombe area | Hedge laying day course |
| 13 Nov | Honiton | Woodland advice day at Perrie Hale Nursery |
| 21 Nov | Hemyock | Walk to Wellington Monument |
| 28 Nov | Mount Fancy Farm | Butterfly Conservation work party |

For full information about all of these events, see the events diary on the AONB website or call us for a paper copy of the autumn/winter programme.



November funding workshops

There will be two Making it Local funding workshops this month. These are free 'pre-application' sessions for small businesses or community groups in the Blackdown Hills or East Devon AONBs interested in applying for grants. There are small grants of £1,000-£10,000 and main grants of £10,000-£100,000.

Development officers Kate Tobin and Nicola Buckingham will be on

hand to give advice about projects and the application process.

Please call the office to book your place on 01823 680626 or e-mail makingitlocal@devon.gov.uk

Thursday 3 November 10.00 - 12.00 noon
 At the Blackdown Healthy Living Centre, Hemyock

Thursday 25 November 10.00 - 12.00 noon
 Location to be arranged.

Letter carving in the forest

A group of enthusiastic members of the public enjoyed a day in the Neroche forest in early October, learning how to carve lettering into wood.

Under the tuition of artist Michael Fairfax, the group used their own choice of a short verse or phrase, and learned how to set out the words in a shallow relief

carving. Once carved, the surface was then charred and polished to produce a lasting finish.

The event was one of the first to take place at a new 'Woodland Workshop' site in the Forestry Commission woodlands near Staple Fitzpaine, developed by the Neroche Scheme.



Blackdown Hills AONB, Neroche and Making it Local, St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock, EX15 3SJ

The Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership is funded by Natural England, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and South Somerset District Council.

The Neroche Scheme is led by the Forestry Commission. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, supported by the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership, Natural England, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and South Somerset District Council, The National Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Somerset Art Works

Making it Local is a locally managed grants scheme in the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONB areas incorporating funding from the EU, Defra, South West RDA and Leader+





◆ **WORSHIPPERS** help the Pakistan flood victims

Harvest cash help for flood victims

WORSHIPPERS in Hemyock took part in the harvest festival season with a difference this year, raising a huge amount of cash to help flood victims overseas.

Following the recent unprecedented rains and flooding in Pakistan, much of the country's harvest was lost.

Hemyock Baptist Church members were determined not to forget those affected and decided to call their harvest celebration The Lost Harvest.

Unusually, worshippers were asked not to bring produce to the service but to be prepared to give financially in a way which reflected the amount that they would normally expect to pay to feed their family for one day or maybe a dinner out.

BBC news footage covering the devastation was shown at the service, prayers were said for the people of Pakistan and a talk — Who is to Blame? — was given on the causes of natural disasters.

The village congregation gave nearly £1,300 to help the people of Pakistan.

Pastor Steven Reed said: "We are a thankful people who have much to give thanks for and we wanted to turn our thankfulness into a harvest of giving this year, remembering the people of Pakistan in their plight."

A representative display of fruit and vegetables and flowers was constructed in the church by John Bimson.

**Contact the news team at
blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk**

Feline friends offer free local neutering

By **ANDERS LARSSON**
anders@tindlenews.co.uk

HONITON Cats Protection has decided to offer free cat neutering in the EX14 postcode area and immediately surrounding area.

The offer is valid until the end of November and co-ordinator Lizzie Manley explained: "Not only do we want to find homes for the kittens we currently have, but also avoid the problem of yet more unwanted kittens next year. We have decided to offer free neutering in the hope there will be less unwanted kittens next spring."

The organisation is also looking for caring homes for several cats.

Tod is now five months old and has been waiting for space to come available to take him in. His three brothers and sisters and half brothers and sisters are all unwanted.

His mother, aunt and father have now all been neutered but had this been done last year we wouldn't have another eight unwanted kittens this year.

Minx and Trixie are two are two others looking for homes. They came to Honiton Cats Protection at eight weeks old but have been waiting for a home of their own ever since. Lizzie said: "These two were from a farm and the parents have now been neutered, with the remaining siblings already homed."

"It's not just farm kittens we see — there were two abandoned at the vets a little while ago because their owners could not afford to look after them.



◆ **TOD** is five months old and came to Honiton Cats Protection with a string of his relatives

"People don't realise how expensive four or six little mouths can be.

"As each mother can have two to three litters a year and every female kitten can get pregnant herself between the ages of four to eight months, lots and lots of cats can soon result without you realising.

"Due to the financial strain on owners and the charity, as well as

unnecessary physical strain on the cats and unwanted kittens, we've taken the view that it's a worthwhile investment to get as many cats neutered as we can and we hope people will take up the offer."

Neutering not only helps to avoid unwanted pregnancies but results in a cat less likely to wander, fight or spray in the house.

It doesn't seem to stop them hunting, so working farm cats can be neutered and still do their job, according to Honiton Cats Protection.

Those wishing to home a cat or take up the neutering offer is asked to call Honiton Cats Protection on 01404 45241.

Information is also available online at www.honiton.cats.org.uk.

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During October and November 2010 we are offering to prepare your Will at a discount from our normal fee. Typically a straightforward Will will cost £150.00 and two "Mirror Wills" for couples will cost £195.00. We will donate one half of that fee to a local charity from a selected list.

There is no obligation on you to leave a gift to a charity but you may wish to do so.

We will also make a discount of £50 against our normal fees if instructed to prepare a power of attorney for you.

For further information or to make an appointment with one of our specialist solicitors please contact:

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GET the kids involved in cooking this Christmas with these irresistibly festive cake and cookie recipes.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES (Makes 35)

125g butter, softened
50g icing sugar
1 medium egg
1tsp vanilla extract
225g plain flour
225g icing sugar
2tbsp warm water

Shaped cookie cutters and sugar sprinkles to decorate

Put the butter in a large bowl beating it until smooth. Sift in the icing sugar and beat again. Break the egg into a bowl. Add the vanilla extract and beat well. Add the

mixture to the large bowl a little at a time, beating as you go. Add the flour and stir the mixture until it starts to form dough. Use your hands to mix.

Wrap the dough in plastic food wrap and put in the fridge for 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 180C/Gas 4.

Unwrap the dough and put it on to a clean surface. Roll it out and use the cutters to cut out lots of shapes. Bake for 10-12 minutes on two greased baking trays until golden. Leave on the trays for five minutes, then put on a wire rack to cool. For the icing, sift the icing sugar into a bowl and mix it with warm water. Spread onto each cookie with a blunt knife. Scatter sugar sprinkles on top.

★ *Recipe from the Christmas Baking Book For Children published by Usborne First Cookbooks, priced £9.99. Available now at www.usborne.co.uk.*

CHRISTMAS TREE CAKES (Makes 15)

100g self-raising flour
100g soft margarine
100g caster sugar
2 eggs
Paper cake cases, two baking trays with shallow pans
Assorted sweets
50g butter or margarine, softened
100g icing sugar, sifted
Green food dye
Squeeze of lemon juice or a few drops of vanilla essence

Heat your oven to 190C/Gas 5. Break the eggs into a cup. Sift the flour into a big bowl. Add the caster sugar, eggs and margarine and stir everything together until you get a smooth, creamy mixture.

Half-fill each case with the mixture and bake for about 20 minutes, then leave on a wire rack to cool.

For the butter icing, put the butter in a bowl and stir with a fork until creamy. Add some icing sugar to the bowl and stir. Mix in the rest of the icing sugar a little at a time. Stir in the green food dye a drop at a time until green. Add the lemon juice or vanilla essence. Spread the butter icing on top of each cake and press the sweets into the icing to make different patterns on the cakes.

Arrange the cakes in a Christmas tree shape, place a star-shaped biscuit at the top and put a chocolate bar at the bottom for a trunk.

★ *Recipe from 30 Christmas Things To Cook And Eat published by Usborne, priced £5.99. Available now. Visit www.usborne.co.uk.*

MARSHMALLOW SNOWMEN (Makes about 10)

200g large white marshmallows
Brown writing icing
Coloured liquorice strips or fruit leather

Chocolate-coated mint sticks (e.g. Matchmakers)

Large chocolate drops
100g white mini marshmallows
Icing sugar, for dusting
About 10 cocktail sticks



Place the marshmallows on a tray. Push two large marshmallows on to each cocktail stick. Ask an adult to trim off any of the stick that is poking out of the top.

Using the writing icing, pipe dots and lines of icing to make the eyes, nose and mouth. Cut the liquorice strips or fruit leather into thin strips and carefully tie around the snowman's neck for a scarf. To make the arms, break the chocolate-coated mint sticks in half and push into the sides of the large marshmallow.

Pipe a small blob of icing onto the top of the snowman's head and position a large chocolate drop on top. Pipe another blob of icing in the middle of the chocolate drop and stick a mini-marshmallow on the very top.

Finally, using the writing icing again, pipe dots down the front of the snowman to look like buttons.

Keep making snowmen like this until you have as many as you need to make a fabulous winter wonderland! To serve, scatter icing sugar over the serving dish, arrange the snowmen on top and dust lightly with more sugar.

★ *Recipe from Christmas Cooking With Kids by Annie Rigg published in hardback by Ryland Peters Small, priced £14.99. Available now. Visit www.rylandpeters.com*

MERINGUE SNOWFLAKES

(Makes about 12)

150g caster sugar
75g egg whites (about 2 medium egg whites)
Edible silver glitter
Edible silver balls
Piping bag, fitted with a star-shaped nozzle
2 solid baking trays, lined with baking parchment

Preheat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Tip the sugar into a small roasting tin. Ask an adult to help you put it in the preheated oven for about five minutes until hot to the touch - be careful not to burn your fingers!

Turn the oven down to 110C. Place the egg whites in a large, clean mixing bowl or in the bowl of an electric mixer. Ask an adult to help you to beat the egg whites (with an

electric whisk, if necessary) until they're frothy.

Tip the hot sugar on to the egg whites in one go and continue to whisk on high speed for about five minutes until the meringue mixture is very stiff, white and cold.

Spoon the meringue mixture into the prepared piping bag. Pipe little blobs of meringue on to the prepared baking trays in the shape of snowflakes. Scatter silver glitter or silver balls over the top.

Ask an adult to help you put the trays in the preheated oven. Bake for about 45 minutes or until crisp and dry. Turn off the oven, leave the door closed and let the snowflakes cool down completely inside.

★ *Recipe from Christmas Cooking With Kids by Annie Rigg published in hardback by Ryland Peters Small, priced £14.99. Available now. Visit www.rylandpeters.com.*

FROSTED FRUIT

(Makes a big plateful)

1 egg white
1 bunch of green grapes
1 bunch of red grapes
Handful of cranberries
Handful of blueberries
Caster sugar, for sprinkling
Baking tray, lined with baking parchment

Put the egg white in a large bowl and whisk with a balloon whisk until foamy. Using a pastry brush, brush the egg white over the fruit - try to cover them evenly and completely.

Hold the bunch of grapes above the prepared baking tray and sprinkle caster sugar over the grapes so that you cover the egg white completely.

Lightly brush the cranberries and blueberries with egg white and coat these in sugar too.

Leave the fruit to dry on the parchment for at least a couple of hours until the sugar has hardened and become crisp.

Arrange the fruit on a platter.

★ *Recipe from Christmas Cooking With Kids by Annie Rigg published in hardback by Ryland Peters Small, priced £14.99. Available now. Visit www.rylandpeters.com.*

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◆ THE Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe at The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre, Taunton

Theatre gets transformed into Narnia

THIS Christmas, The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre, Taunton, will be transformed into Narnia for The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Running throughout December, this dazzling production is filled with music, songs and special effects which will enchant both children and adults alike.

The cast of 10 actors includes Caroline Horton, winner of the Best Solo Performer at The Stage Awards For Acting Excellence (Edinburgh Festival 2010), as the White Witch. She trained at École Philippe Gaulier, where Emma Thompson and Sacha Baron Cohen also trained. Due to her small stature she is frequently cast as young girls, but for her first role as the baddie, she will perform on expanding stilts throughout the show.

Actor and singer Aaron Romano will play the great lion Aslan. He studied Drama and Theatre Arts at

Middlesex University before training at the Central School of Speech and Drama to complete his Masters in Acting and Musical Theatre. He has recently appeared in national tours of The Pirates of Penzance and Joseph.

Max Saunders, who grew up in Minehead and attended West Somerset College before continuing his training at Italia Conti, is the mischievous Edmund. Lucy is played by another Somerset actor, Joanna Calderwood began her career studying Performing Arts at Somerset College before attending the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA).

For both Max and Joanna The Lion The Witch And The Wardrobe will be their first professional production in their home county. Three performers who have worked with The Brewhouse before returning to Somerset again this year. Philip Buck who played one of the ugly sisters in Cinderella The Glass Slipper (2008)

returns as Mr Tumnus.

Also from Cinderella Catriona Martin returns as Mrs Beaver. Daniel Copeland played Emmanuel the angel in last year's When Santa Fell To Earth and has recently been Johnny Vegas' body double in the hit TV show Ideal. He will play Professor Digory Kirke, the eccentric professor in whose house the children find the magical wardrobe. Daniel Slade will play Peter and Abby Leamon, who recently played Lady Anne in Richard III at Exeter Northcott will play Susan.

The Brewhouse has built a reputation for its in-house productions and for the first time its visual arts department will collaborate with the technical team to design and create the magical land of Narnia on stage.

Tickets are priced at £12.50 to £17.50. For more information call the box office on 01823 283244 or visit www.thebrewhouse.net.

Van Morrison tribute night promises to entertain fans

THE Vancoovers are appearing at the Guildhall, Axminster, on Saturday, December 11th.

Tickets are £10 on the door and advance tickets can be bought from Archway Bookshop, Axminster, or by calling the ticket line on 01297 33595.

The event promises an evening of soulful music celebrating the vintage best of Van Morrison.

Morrison's repertoire touched many generations and left thousands of fans bemused but enthralled by his music.

The Vancoovers select music from his legendary albums, including

Astral Weeks, Moondance, Tupelo Honey, Enlightenment as well as songs from his early solo career and Them.

This musical tribute aims to recreate the vibrant live and studio recordings and celebrate one of music's great songwriters and soul survivors.

FREE Leisure Review Diary Dates listing form

Date
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View from the Blackdown Hills, Tindle House, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or email blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk.

Please note: This is a free service and whilst we endeavour to include all entries, we cannot guarantee all listings submitted will be published. Please use one form per event.

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Prawn Cocktail with Brown Bread & Butter
Chicken Liver Pate with Warm Toast
Breaded Brie served with Red Currant Jelly

Main Courses

Roast Turkey with Sage & Onion Stuffing, Bacon wrapped Chipolatas & Cranberry sauce
Grilled Pork Steak with Pepper Sauce
Roast Beef with Red Wine Gravy
Baked Salmon served with a Tomato & Basil Sauce
Mushroom, Cranberry & Brie Wellington Pie

All the meals are served with Roast Potatoes and Traditional Fresh Vegetables

Desserts

Tumbleberry Pie
Medley of Apples & Raspberries topped with winter berries served with cream
Chocolate Yule Log with Clotted Cream
Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce
Chocolate Chip Minty Fresh Sundae
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Coffee & Mint

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Christmas Party Menu 2010

Starters

Roasted vine tomato & red pepper soup with pesto oil butter croutons & warm crusty bread
Chicken liver & smoked bacon parfait with buttered toast & red onion marmalade
Crispy Gressingham duck & cranberry salad with cracked black pepper & honey vinaigrette
Gravadlax, dill & lemon crème fraîche
Caramelised goats cheese en crouste with baby spinach, tomato & chervil salad

Mains

Honey & cranberry roasted West Country turkey with chipolata, sage & onion stuffing & pan gravy
Roasted leg of Devon lamb with herb roast new potatoes & redcurrant pan jus
Oven roasted cod fillet served on tomato & coriander salsa with pesto dressing
Wild mushroom & rocket risotto with shaved parmesan & truffle virgin oil

Desserts

Traditional Christmas pudding with brandy & vanilla cream sauce
Winterberry crème brulee with shortbread biscuits
Black cherry & dark chocolate roulade with a cointreau chocolate sauce
Caramelised lemon tart with vanilla ice cream & fruit coulis
Coffee & mint

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Christmas Food & Drink

One Fat Lady back in flavour

When Clarissa Dickson Wright takes on a challenge, the aristocratic cook does it properly. The former 'Fat Lady' talks about the challenges of tackling one-pot recipes for her latest book Potty and why the new Conservative government has brought her back into favour with TV executives.

Formerly one half of the Two Fat Ladies, the larger-than-life cook loves hunting, fresh meat from the butcher and chewing the fat.

But it's a while since you last saw her on television. "Blair was trying to ban everything I stood for... and Alistair Campbell ran the BBC," she says, as explanation for her absence.

While she's here to talk about her new one pot cookbook, Potty, the cook is equally as excited about becoming flavour of the month again.

Since New Labour's exit, Dickson Wright says her agent has been inundated with offers and she's just back from a bout of filming.

"I always said that when there was a change of government I'd be back on television. The old lot hated Clarissa And The Countryman [her second BBC series]. I was making television about all the things Blair was trying to ban and get rid of - like farming."

While the former PM might disagree with her interpretation of history, it's a fact that Dickson Wright marched with the Countryside Alliance against the last government's controversial Hunting Act, and has always been keen to voice her disapproval over any perceived lack of support for British food and agriculture.

For the last few years, the aristocratic cook and former alcoholic (who managed to drink her way through a £2.8 million fortune in her early years) says her professional life has revolved around writing books.

"When the publisher Hodder approached me with this idea, I said, 'On God no' because, having been a cookery book seller for 20 years, I knew that one pot cookbooks are always rather dreary."

Still, she likes a challenge, and soon began experimenting with the idea.

"There are lots of variants on what constitutes a pot,"

she laughs. "I remembered the eggs and bacon in a tin mug idea from when I was rector at the University of Aberdeen and was rustling up food for the students."

One of the recipes in Potty has attracted attention for its less than appetising title: Primordial Soup.

"I was sitting next to a biologist who worked at the Natural History Museum. We were discussing where life came from and she said she thought it came from primordial soup."

"What a great idea for a recipe", I thought, so I went off and created a Japanese-type soup filled with seaweed, so it looked like the beginnings of life."

Luckily for Dickson Wright, having written 16 cookbooks she now has "a palate in [her] head".

"I lie in bed thinking about what to do. I think about a chicken, add flavours to it and then I get up and make it - and nowadays it virtually always works."

She describes her style of cooking as very simple. "It's all about the quality of ingredients. But while your food will be 10 times better if you've got a good fishmonger and a good butcher, if you get the flavours right it will still be good."

"Although if anyone who's read more than one of my books still buys their meat in supermarkets, I'm surprised they're still buying my books."

Having just completed some filming for a new series, The Great British Food Revival, to be broadcast in January 2011 on BBC Two, she says she wishes people would focus programmes on food, rather than celebrity chefs.

"I plead with Pat Llewellyn (the producer behind the Two Fat Ladies, Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver): 'Go away from the chef thing - no one cares any more what the food tastes like'."

But Dickson Wright's a little more hopeful about the state of British agriculture now there's been a change of government.

"A few years ago I went up to a Defra stand at the Yorkshire Show and there was no mention of British food, or farming. So I asked about it and the man on the stand said, 'We can import it cheaper'."

"Now we have a Defra minister who's a farmer, Richard Benyon, and Jim Paice, who comes from farming stock and knows a thing about British food and farming."

The Old Inn, Kilminster



Christmas Menu

Available 1st December – 24th December 2010

Cream of parsnip and apple soup

Chefs own chicken liver and Madeira pate with red onion marmalade
Smoked salmon and haddock fish cakes with a lemon and dill sauce on crisp leaves
Our own smoked chicken on a crisp salad with straw potatoes and a honey and wholegrain mustard dressing

Turkey breast rolled with bacon and leg meat, onion and sage stuffing with a cranberry jus and honey glazed roasted baby carrots, sprouts and roast potatoes
Slow braised lamb shank in a rich tomato, red wine and rosemary sauce with green beans and creamy mash potato
Salmon fillet with fennel and potatoes in a white wine and rosemary sauce.
Tomato and red onion tart topped with goats cheese presented on a chestnut salad.

Sticky toffee pudding with a butterscotch sauce
Passion fruit cheesecake
Traditional Christmas pudding served with brandy sauce

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| England 5 Days in Carlisle Departs 16/05/11 Returns 20/05/11 Your break will begin by travelling north to Carlisle and staying 4 nights at The Hallmark Hotel. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Carlisle to Hexham via Hadrian Wall, Carlisle to Settle - return by train and a boat trip on Lake Windermere, over the Kirkstone Past. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £399 | England 5 Days in Great Yarmouth Departs 13/06/11 Returns 17/06/11 Your break will begin by travelling to Great Yarmouth and spending four nights at the New Beach Hotel. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Norfolk Broads Cruise aboard the unique Mississippi Paddle Boat, Norwich, Bressingham Steam & Gardens, and a free day in Great Yarmouth. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £399 | England 5 Days in Eastbourne Depart 07/09/11 Returns 11/09/11 Your break will begin by travelling to Eastbourne and staying four nights at the Hadleigh Hotel or the Haddon Hall, situated on the Grand Parade. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Battle (Abbey and Battlefield), Hastings, Beachy Head and countryside centre, Newhaven and Paradise garden centre, Brighton, leisure in Eastbourne. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £329 |
| Wales 5 Days in Tenby <i>We have two holidays running to Tenby this year</i> Departs 25/04/11 Returns 29/04/11 Departs 29/08/11 Returns 02/09/11 Your break will begin by travelling to Tenby and staying four nights at the Clarence House Hotel. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price, there is also a 'complimentary' one hour house bar every evening on this tour. The tour will be visiting: Saundersfoot, St Davids (officially Britain's smallest city with the largest cathedral in Wales), Tenby (free time in the town), Carmarthen, Lovespoon workshop, Avondale Glass blowing (a unique and fascinating experience). <i>Limited number of non single supplement rooms. Admission charges may apply</i> £319 | Seasonal 5 Days in Eastbourne <i>Turkey & Tinsel</i> Departs 31/10/11 Returns 04/11/11 Your break will begin by travelling to Eastbourne and staying four nights at the Hadleigh Hotel or the Haddon Hall, situated on the Grand Parade. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Beachy Head, Newhaven Park Garden centre, Brighton, Cite Europe, Calais via the Eurotunnel and a leisure in Eastbourne. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £289 | Seasonal 5 Days in North England <i>Turkey & Tinsel</i> Departs 14/11/11 Returns 18/11/11 Your break will begin by travelling north to Dumfriesshire and staying for 4 nights at The Gretna Hall Hotel at Gretna Green. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Moffat Woollen Mill, Carlisle, Hadrians Wall, to Hexham Lake Windermere and Kirkstone pass. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £279 |
| Seasonal 5 Days in Blackpool <i>Turkey & Tinsel</i> Departs 21/11/11 Returns 25/11/11 Your break will begin by travelling north and staying four nights at The Belgrave Madison Hotel. The tour will be visiting: Skipton (Canal Boat Trip), Settle, Foulridge Canal Boat Trip, Hawes Christmas Market, A Tree Day for Christmas shopping in Blackpool. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £199 | Seasonal 5 Day Isle of Wight <i>Turkey & Tinsel</i> Departs 05/12/11 Returns 09/12/11 Your break will begin by travelling from Southampton to Ryde and staying four nights at the fabulous Burlington Hotel situated in Sandown. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Day trip around the island, Godshill (known as the most photographed village in Britain), Shanklin and Ventnor Botanic Gardens, Ryde, The Waltzing Waters, Arlington Bams and Busy Bee Garden Centre and Free leisure on the island. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £259 | Seasonal 5 Days in St Ives <i>Turkey & Tinsel</i> Departs 12/12/11 Returns 16/12/11 Your break will begin by travelling to St. Ives and spending four nights at the Cottage Hotel, situated in Corbis Bay. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast are included in the price. The tour will be visiting: Lands End, St. Just, Penzance and a Leisure Day in St Ives. <i>All inclusive price per person</i> £199 |

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ASTON Martin doesn't 'do' half measures. When the company says that its products are thoroughbred sports cars it really means it. And to prove the point it has taken to occasionally racing the stuff it makes.

Far from being an extract from some glossy brochure, this is all true. Recent years have seen Aston Martin compete in the popular Nurburgring 24-hour endurance race with road registered Vantages. This is no walk in the park race, as the gruelling conditions have claimed many high profile scalps over the years. After securing a string of class victories, you can't blame Aston Martin from wanting to make a fuss.

As a way of celebrating, Aston Martin has produced a special edition V8 Vantage - the N420. This isn't the company's first effort - there was also 2007's N400. It's clear that the N420 is not a cynical attempt to cash in on racing glory. The detailed changes made to the V8 Vantage donor car are enough to make this special edition, well, special.

In true race car tradition the N420 is louder than a regular Vantage. No mean feat in itself, the 4.7-litre V8 powering the Vantage family is already a vocal participant. The N420's sports exhaust not only allows the V8 to breathe more freely but also generates a harder edged tone that befits a car with a proven racing pedigree.

That the sonic enhancement can be heard lower down the rev range is a welcome bonus. Remember, for all its leather and plush trimmings the N420 is more than capable of hitting the track and turning in respectable lap times - all you're missing is a roll cage and other safety paraphernalia.

With the N420's V8 motor unchanged from the donor Vantage, 420 horsepower remains good enough in the real world to see the wrong side of the national speed limit in no time at all. The sprint to 62mph takes a brisk 4.8 seconds and it all stops at 180mph - on a track, of course.

But the numbers only tell half the story. The subtle changes to the Vantage have resulted in a useful change in the car's character. Much of the credit for this must go to the 27kg weight reduction programme and the inclusion of Aston's Sports Pack.

The former sees carbon fibre used for the car's lightweight seats and the likes of the front aerodynamic splitter and rear diffuser. The Sports Pack is a carefully chosen bundle of revisions to the springs, dampers and anti roll bars, and it's these changes that see an immediate improvement to the car's agility. Yes, the ride is now a little firmer but the steering is more accurate and responsive. Thankfully there's still enough suspension compliance on battered B-roads to make a countryside drive fun, although it's on larger arterial roads where the N420 shines.

Simply put the N420 is an engaging and intoxicating experience. You sit low down in those figure-hugging carbon seats, and the N420's compact size ensures a level of agility that's hard to find in the some rivals that claim to be performance cars but are really bloated Grand Tourers.

Opt for Aston's Sportshift gearbox over the standard fit six-speed manual transmission and you're another step closer to that full-on race car experience. This 'semi-auto' unit is essentially a manual 'box with the clutch action automated for your convenience and to reduce gearchange times.

The fully auto mode does a good job but taking personal charge of shifting via the column mounted paddles is the way to go. You'll need to feather the throttle to smooth the gearshifts, but getting it right is a rewarding experience. It works best with a fair few revs dialled in, and it's when you're really motoring that you fully appreciate the gearbox's advantages.

Far from being a bone-jarring experience the N420 is an impressively rounded performer, certainly in the context of a fast and focused road car. The steering's wonderfully direct feel and the car's rasping and occasionally shrieking exhaust



Aston Martin just doesn't do half measures

note are just two of the many highlights. Close your eyes and the latter could have thinking you're spectating at Spa or some other classic GT-friendly circuit.

Predictably there's a modest cost premium associated with the N420 over a regular Vantage before you add the Sportshift gearbox, and only you and your bank manager will be able to make that judgment call.

That said, all that extra carbon fibre doesn't come cheap and the associated performance enhancements are genuine improvements. Viewed as a whole: the N420 is a worthwhile addition to the V8 Vantage line-up and, for someone with even a passing interest in the GT racing scene, well worth the extra outlay.



◆ THE 2010 Aston Martin V8 Vantage N420 is the firm making a fuss over its well-deserved victories

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